

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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### 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic and common name: *Coronet*

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### 2. OWNER/LOCATION

International Yacht Restoration School  
449 Thames Street  
Newport, RI 02840

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### 3. CLASSIFICATION

**Category**        Structure  
**Ownership**     Private  
**Public Acquisition**   N/A  
**Status**            Work in progress  
**Accessible**     Yes [as of 12/02 (restricted)]

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### 7. DESCRIPTION

**Condition**      fair – altered

*Coronet* (1885) is a wooden hull schooner yacht, a vessel designed and built to the standards of a workboat, but fitted, decorated, and used as a grand yacht. She is 133 feet long on deck, 123 feet at the waterline, with a beam of 27 feet. *Coronet* displaces 380 tons. *Coronet* is a two-masted schooner, gaff-rigged, with fore-and-aft topsails.

#### HULL

*Coronet's* hull exhibits a plumb stem, straight keel, a short counter, and a relatively straight sheer. Her longitudinal structures are constructed of white oak, including the keel, stem, and sternpost, as well as the planking and framing. The deck beams and deadwood are long-leaf yellow pine, and her deck is white pine. Locust treenails were used to fasten the planks to the frames and yellow pine ceiling.

*Coronet* carries her ballast in the bilge. Individual bars of iron were cast to fit the specific shapes of the spaces between the frames and fastened in place so they could not shift. In her early years, *Coronet's* hull was sheathed with copper plates to protect the hull from sea worms and marine growth. This copper sheathing was removed in 1909 and never replaced. Except for the stern, which was partially rebuilt in 1955 after it was damaged in a collision, the hull shape remains as it was modeled. Planks were replaced over time, as needed, for routine maintenance.

#### DECK

*Coronet's* deck was originally clear; only handsome curved mahogany skylights interrupted the deck. At present, there is a large deckhouse, just aft of midship, and large flat skylights.

In 1934, a fire on the wharf where *Coronet* was berthed caused damage to the deck, bowsprit, and bulwarks, and broke the glass in the curved mahogany skylights. The damaged elements were all repaired. The original curved skylights were replaced by the flat lights in place today. In 1945, the deckhouse was installed. A companionway, now inside the deckhouse, leads to the saloon.

During a 1957 deck replacement, some alterations were made to the forward knees, bulwark, and rail cap because of rot and damage. This maintenance, although not ideal, helped to keep *Coronet* in use. The replacement of the deck also helped to minimize freshwater infiltration, which would have severely damaged the knees, beams, and interior paneling. Much of the original deck hardware remains today, including the davits, steering quadrant, mushroom ventilators, bulwark cleats, bitts, chocks, and the windlass.

## RIG

The 1885 rig featured a mainmast and maintopmast (92 feet and 45 feet), foremast and foretopmast (89 feet and 45 feet), and a 21-foot bowsprit combined with a 39-foot jibboom. The main boom was 79 feet, the fore boom 38 feet, the main gaff 40 feet, and fore gaff 36 feet. Spars were made of pine, and the rigging was wire rope. *Coronet* originally carried 8,305 square feet of sail on mainsail, foresail, main and fore topsails, forestaysail, forestaysail jib, flying jib and jib topsail. She had an additional square sail (3,135 square feet) for running downwind. The sails were canvas.

Over the years, *Coronet's* rigging had been somewhat altered. In the 1930s and again in 1946, her rig was shortened to make her easier to sail. When *Coronet* came to her present berth in 1995, her rigging was rotten and infested, and it was removed for safety. Some pieces of the masts and sail were saved to document their appearance and construction during future restoration. The vessel's current stewards are undertaking a year-long study of the historic rig, using photographic and documentary evidence, in anticipation of restoration of the masts, spars, rigging, and sails.

## INTERIOR

*Coronet's* belowdeck areas remain remarkably intact, both in the arrangement of space and in finish and decoration. Forwardmost is the forecabin, then in succession, the galley, staterooms, head, saloon, aft cabins, and the engine room.

The forecabin contains the crew bunks, lockers, hanging racks, and gear storage. Originally, this was only accessible from deck through a companionway. In 1905, the bulkhead separating the forecabin from the rest of the vessel was removed.

Aft of the forecabin is the galley, including the pantry, the captain's private galley, and a small head. The equipment in the galley includes an oak icebox, a freshwater distiller, a copper water heater, and a pump sink providing both fresh and salt water.

Aft of the galley are four large staterooms and two small quarter cabins, ranged along both sides of a central passageway. Their decoration and arrangement have been altered slightly over time, but for the most part, they are remarkably intact. Some of these changes were discovered when interior features were carefully removed and documented in 2002.

All cabins are decorated with mahogany paneling, including open areas for wall-coverings. In some spaces, fragments of overhead gilding, lincrusta wall covering, and upholstery fabric survive. The two staterooms at the beam still have their settees, installed in 1885. The two starboard staterooms have porcelain drop sinks. The two port staterooms have original mahogany and marble top washstands. The head (with a bathtub) is on the port side of the central passageway, and originally offered fresh and salt water; it has been refitted with modern fixtures.

The saloon, aft of the staterooms, was originally 25 by 25 feet; it was reduced in size by half during the installation of an engine room in 1945-46. The saloon still includes two large settees, one on each side, stained glass panels on the entrance doors, carved mahogany and engraved mirror panels, and a marble top sideboard. These objects were carefully documented and removed in the 2001-2002 phase of restoration.

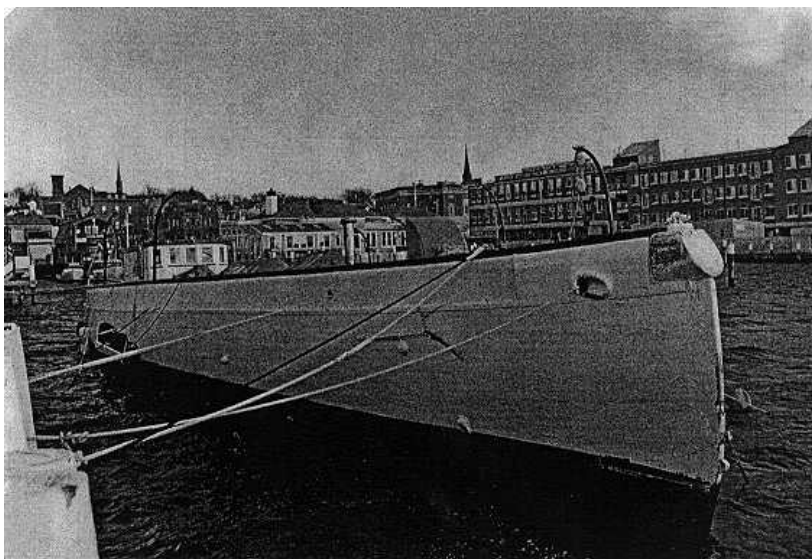
There are two quarter-cabins, one on each side of the main staircase aft of the main saloon. Finished like staterooms, they are also minimally altered. The mahogany paneling of one has been painted white.

The engine room is now empty, during restoration.

An aft cabin, accessible through its own companionway, was the captain's and officer's quarters. Simply finished, it retains its original configuration, with berths and lockers for the captain and mates.

## BERTH

*Coronet* is currently afloat and docked at the International Yacht Restoration School, in Newport, Rhode Island, which will be her homeport. She has been extensively documented over the last 5 years, and for 24 months IYRS staff have been carefully removing and cataloging all non-structural elements from below decks in order to start the restoration process. Her restoration will last several years and will be completed by professional shipwrights and preservationists.






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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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### Applicable National Register Criteria

**A:** Recreation/Entertainment

**C:** Architecture

**Period of Significance** 1885-1905

**Significant Dates** 1885

**Cultural Affiliation** na

**Significant Person** N/A

**Architect** Smith & Terry, Christopher Crosby

**Builder** C. & R. Poillon, Brooklyn, New York

**State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria consideration and areas and periods of significance noted above.**

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*Coronet* is one of the few remaining large wooden vessels of the nineteenth century, and the only nineteenth-century yacht. Her survival with a high level of integrity is testimony to the craftsmanship and skill of her builders. *Coronet* represents two distinct vessel types—she is a yacht built with a New York pilot schooner hull, a luxury vessel with an important workboat lineage. In addition, she is significant for her associations with deep-water cruising and yacht racing in the years preceding and following the turn of the twentieth century. The vessel is substantially intact—her hull shape is unchanged and her luxurious interior is an important document of grand yachting in the Victorian era.

*Coronet* has had three distinct careers. She was built for Rufus T. Bush, a New York businessman with interests in the oil industry, and was owned by him; she was later cruised and raced by a succession of seven owners, all wealthy New Yorkers, all with international and diplomatic connections, all members of the prestigious New York Yacht Club. In 1905 *Coronet* was purchased by a The Kingdom, a Christian group, which used the great yacht in its evangelizing missions around the globe. In the mid-1990s *Coronet* was acquired by the

International Yacht Restoration School, which has undertaken a several-year restoration of the vessel. The goal is to return the yacht to her turn-of-the-century appearance and function. IYRS has dismantled some of the belowdeck features to study, document, and restore the interior finishes. When the restoration is completed, *Coronet* will be a unique resource, able to document important aspects of American naval architecture and the history of recreational sailing.

## YACHTING

During *Coronet's* first career, as a privately owned yacht, she cruised and raced extensively and circumnavigated the globe. Her history of use is closely linked to the history of American yachting, including deep-sea cruising and ocean racing, and the development of yachting as a demonstration of personal wealth. The elite social and financial connections of her first seven owners were substantial, and they used *Coronet* to display their stature and prestige in New York's aristocracy of wealth.

When Rufus T. Bush ordered *Coronet* from the C & R Poillon yard, he was already an accomplished New York City businessman. As for most wealthy men of the time, owning a large yacht, either sail or steam, was important component of and evidence of success. For the New York elite, yachts helped to demonstrate their financial status and rank in society. A sail to England was the first thing Bush undertook when his schooner was ready in the spring of 1886--deep water cruising was sophisticated sailing, and American yachtsmen were always eager to sail to Britain to display their boats to another great seafaring nation.

Owners would often spend as much time on board their yachts as they did in their homes, and they wanted both to offer the same level of comfort and luxury. The interiors of yachts reflected their role of demonstrating success, and vessels like *Coronet* were often decorated by the same designers and featured the same materials as lavish New York City mansions. The use of stained glass, marble, fine woods, luxurious wall-coverings, and detailed gilt treatments on vessels like *Coronet* gave the sense of being on land rather than on sea.

In addition to the role she played on the grand yachting scene, *Coronet* was also involved in racing. Bush had specified when she was built that *Coronet* should be designed for cruising, not for speed, but early in 1887 he decided to bid a challenge "to all keel schooner yachts of American build in order to compare the seagoing and sailing qualities of the keel schooner yachts built and now owned in this country"<sup>1</sup>. The course, to be raced in the spring, started at Sandy Hook Light off New York City and ended in Queenstown, Ireland (now Cork), Ireland. C. H. Colt (of the Colt firearms company) and his 1866 schooner yacht *Dauntless* accepted Bush's challenge. The contest, the third ever trans-Atlantic race, immediately became a fashionable topic in the New York City press. Both yachts had New York Yacht Club representatives onboard; Lt. W. N. King was on *Coronet* and took the first known photographs onboard a racing yacht at sea. *Coronet* had a crew of 21, including the captain, 2 mates, a boatswain and 14 deckhands, in addition to the steward, cook and mess boy. Under the command of Captain Christopher Crosby, *Coronet* won the race by 30

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<sup>1</sup> *Forest and Stream*, January 6, 1887

hours. The March 28 edition of the *New York Times* devoted its entire front page to the finish of the race.

On September 20, 1902, under the ownership of Louis Bossert, *Coronet* raced from Coney Island, New York, to the North End Lightship off Cape May, New Jersey, and back in a 280-mile offshore race. She won the race against her contemporary schooner yachts *Endymion*, *Iroquois*, *Saccho* and *Thistle*. *Coronet* was also a frequent participant in the New York Yacht Club regattas and cruises between 1885 and 1905.

In the spring of 1888 Captain Crosby sailed *Coronet* around Cape Horn to the west coast to meet Bush, his family, and friends in San Diego, California. From there the yacht began her first circumnavigation on a 12-month cruise. *Coronet* was the first American-registered yacht to round Cape Horn (the Panama Canal had not yet been built). *Coronet* stopped in Honolulu, Yokohama, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Bombay, then traveled to Aden and Malta through the Suez Canal, and then cruised the Mediterranean before sailing back to New York. At each port of call, Bush and his family and guests would go ashore and visit different points of interest. This onshore travel often brought attention to the boat and her owner. Occasionally, the owner visited local royalty and diplomats. King Kalakaua of Hawaii and Alexander Graham Bell both visited on board *Coronet*.

*Coronet's* fourth owner, from 1893-1898, was railroad tycoon and banker Arthur Curtiss James. It was his view that yachts should be more than playthings for the rich. "Yachtsmen have been criticized and in some cases justly, for using their magnificent fleet of vessels as mere toys. What an assistance they might be in advancing our knowledge of geography, if their pleasure trips could be turned to some practical account!"<sup>2</sup> An 1889 graduate of Amherst College, James was a strong supporter of education and the sciences, and he used *Coronet* to advance these causes. James placed her at the disposal of a joint Japanese-American scientific expedition formed to observe a total eclipse of the sun in Japan on August 9, 1896.

Between 1907 and 1909, The Kingdom sailed *Coronet* on her second circumnavigation, and the now-22-year-old yacht once again proved her sturdy construction and seaworthiness.

## NAVAL ARCHITECTURE

In the early 1880s, Rufus Bush commissioned a model for a large sailing yacht (vessels were then built from small-scale half-models). After receiving a number of proposed models, Bush chose one prepared by the Smith & Terry shipyard in Greenport, Long Island. After Bush's captain, Christopher Crosby, made some alterations to the stern of the model, it was given to the C & R Poillon yard for construction.

*Coronet* was modeled and built during a transitional period in the design of yachts. Vessels with less beam, greater draft, and outside ballast were becoming more popular. But even as the design standards were changing, *Coronet* was built in the traditional way. An 1887

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<sup>2</sup> Todd, Mabel Loomis. *Corona and Coronet*. Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1899, p. xxvii.

article in *Forest & Stream* (just before the trans-Atlantic races) commented on the conservative nature of her design:

"The *Dauntless* was built in 1866, the *Coronet* in 1885, but as far as any radical improvement in model or build is concerned, there is nothing in the latter to denote that she was not built before, instead of twenty years after the *Dauntless*. She is simply a big schooner, expensively fitted up, but modeled and built as all the rest of her fellows have been and in her design and construction the ideas as to form, ballast and rig that are generally accepted by naval architect[s] today have no place."<sup>3</sup>

The description of the *Coronet* as "a big schooner, expensively fitted up" is apt. In many ways she is typical of the New York pilot schooners, an important and once numerous workboat of the era—broad beamed, gaff rigged, a hull with a plumb stem, straight keel, a short counter, and a straight sheer, with the ballast in the bilge. Most pilot schooners were 70 to 80 feet on deck; *Coronet* is 133 feet, the additional length being needed for staterooms and saloon not necessary in a working boat but required for a yacht.

The conservative, even old-fashioned, quality of her design and construction owes something to Captain Crosby, known to be a supporter of traditional methods in at least one respect: "no outside ballast for me, I want a lively vessel under my feet when it blows hard." (fn)

*Coronet* is the only extant example of the 110 known vessels built by the Poillon yard. The last extant pilot schooner, *Thomas F. Bayard* (1880, also built by Poillon) sunk and was broken up in Vancouver, B.C., in 2002. *Coronet* alone now remains to document this type.

## CURRENT RESTORATION

In 1995 IYRS initiated the research program the research program for the *Coronet* Restoration Project, which is still ongoing today. Through this research program over 160 historic photographs of *Coronet* were located internationally, newspaper articles were discovered, numerous family records were found, oral interviews with descendants were conducted, artifacts from her previous owners were documented, and the early configuration of her interior was investigated. The research has been cataloged and files for reference by the restoration team and scholars.

The *Coronet* Restoration Project began physically documenting *Coronet* upon her arrival in Newport in 1995. Historic American Building Survey (HABS) and Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation was completed before any restoration work was started. IYRS now has 67 HABS documentation drawings of elevations, overhead, configuration and decorative details of the historic interior. The 45 black-and-white HAER photographs are stored in the Library of Congress – Prints and Photographs Division.

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<sup>3</sup> *Forest and Stream*, March 10, 1887



The HABS drawings were used during the removal of *Coronet's* interior joinery from 2002-2003. The drawings were used to carefully label the individual elements in preparation for the restoration of the hull. Each of the 1,286 joinery pieces that were removed from the vessel were tagged and recorded on the drawings creating a very detailed record of the exact location of the object before removal. The removal of all joinery and artifacts from *Coronet's* hull was conducted only after careful inspection of the historic context, degree of integrity, and necessity of removal. All elements were photographed in situ before removal, and then immediately thereafter to record the state in which it was put into storage.

In 2002 IYRS started a historic sheerline study of *Coronet's* hull. Over time *Coronet* has hogged, or drooped at the bow and stern. Although this is expected in an older wooden vessel, a historic study was needed to determine what the historic sheerline looked like. The historic photographs discovered in the research phase aided in the understanding of *Coronet's* historic sheerline, or upward curve of the deck. The photographs were digitized and laid over *Coronet's* current lines. The juxtaposition of the two *Coronet's* showed IYRS her historic shape, which will aid the restoration project.

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## 10. MAIN BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Stephens, William P. *Traditions and Memories of American Yachting*. Brooklin, Maine, Wooden Boat Publications Inc., 1981.

Periodicals

*Forest & Stream*, January 6, 1887; March 10, 1887, pp. 142-143.

*New York Herald*, February 5, 1885

## GLOSSARY

**Ballast** Any heavy material such as lead, iron or stone placed low in a vessel to increase stability:

**Beam:** The transverse measurement of the ship in her widest part.

**Bilge:** The lowest part of a vessel on either side of the **keel**.

**Bow:** the foremost end of a vessel.

**Bowsprit:** A **spar** projecting over the **stem** of a vessel to which are attached **forestays** supporting the **mast** and from which the **foresails** are set.

**Bulkhead:** A transverse and longitudinal partition separating portions of a vessel.

**Bulwark:** The extension of the ships side above the weather deck.

**Ceiling:** The inside **planking** carried from the **bilge** to the level of the **deck beams**.

**Centerboard:** A pivoted board or plate housed in a fore and aft trunk that can be lowered to prevent leeway.

**Companionway:** A ladder leading down from an opening in the deck to a cabin or saloon below.

**Counter:** The underside of the overhang at the stern.

**Davit:** Equipment used to hoist and retain small boats or anchors.

**Deadwood:** Solid timbering in the bow and stern, just above the **keel**. The deadwood adds strength to the vessels longitudinal structure.

**Deck beams:** The transverse beams supporting the deck and connecting the vessels sides.

**Flying Jib:** The outermost jib sail when more than one headsail is carried.

**Fore-and-Aft:** Referring to anything that is parallel to the keel.

**Fore Boom:** The spar extending from the **foremast** to which the foot of the **foresail** is secured.

**Fore Gaff:** The **spar** extending from the **foremast** to which the head of the **foresail** is secured.

**Forecastle:** The forward section of a vessel reserved for the crew's quarters.

**Foremast:** The forward mast on a two masted schooner. (*Coronet*)

**Foresail:** A triangular sail set on a **forestay** or the lowest sail set on the **foremast**.

**Forestaysail:** A **foresail** bent on a **forestay**.

**Foretopmast:** A mast attached to and extending above the **foremast**.

**Frames:** The transverse members that form the "ribs" of the vessel. They attach to the **keel** and stiffen and shape the **planking**.

**Gaff-Rigged:** A vessel with one or more **spars** that extend the head of a sail.

**Galley:** The equivalent of a kitchen.

**Head:** The toilet on a vessel. Often used to mean the space in which the toilet, basin and other conveniences are located.

**Jibboom:** An extension of the **bowsprit** used on large sailing vessels.

**Jib Topsail:** A triangular sail carried above and forward of the jib.

**Keel:** The structural member that is the backbone of the vessel, connected to the **stem** in the bow and the **sternpost** at the stern..

**Knees:** An angular reinforcing structure used when two members come together at an angle.

**Main Boom:** The **spar** extending from the **mainmast** to which the foot of the **mainsail** is secured.

**Main Gaff:** The **spar** extending from the **mainmast** to which the head of the **mainsail** is secured.

**Mainmast:** On two masted schooners, the after, (usually taller) is the mainmast.

**Mainsail:** The lowest sail set from the **mainmast**.

**Maintopmast:** A mast attached to and extending above the **mainmast**.

**Planking:** Broad planks used to cover the vessel's sides or to cover the **deckbeams**.

**Plumb:** Positioned in a right angle to the waterline.

**Port:** The left hand side of the vessel as viewed from aft.

**Rail Cap:** The top of the **bulwark**.

**Settee:** Couch like seating.

**Shallow Draft:** Describing a vessel able to float in shallow water.

**Sheer:** The upward curve of the deck towards the bow and stern.

**Spars:** The general term for any wooden pole support used in the rigging of a ship.

**Square Sail:** A quadrilateral sail set athwartships.

**Starboard:** The right hand side of the vessel as seen from aft.

**Stateroom:** The equivalent of a bedroom or private space for guests.

**Stem:** The foremost timber forming the bow, which is joined to the keel.

**Stern:** The after end of the vessel.

**Stern Post:** The after most timber, joined to the **keel**. On a wooden vessel the rudder was often hung from the stern post.

**Straight Keel:** A **keel** parallel to the waterline.

**Straight Sheer:** The sheer has very little curve from bow to stern.

**Topsails:** A triangular or quadrilateral sail set above the **gaff**.

**Treenails:** Cylindrical wooden shafts driven through the planks, **frames** and **ceiling**. When the treenails swell they hold the wood in place, forming a very tight hold.

**Windlass:** A drum fitted with ratchet and brake that can be worked to haul or hold chain as desired.